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CHAPTER 3.0

Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

This chapter describes the environment that would be affected by the development of the Proposed Action and the No Action alternative. The environmental baseline information summarized in this chapter was obtained from field and laboratory studies of the project area, published sources, unpublished materials, and communication with relevant government agencies and private individuals with knowledge of the area. The affected environment for individual resources was delineated based on the area of potential direct and indirect environmental impacts for the proposed project. For some resources, such as geology, soils, and vegetation, the affected area was determined to be the physical location and immediate vicinity of the areas to be disturbed by the project. For other resources, such as water resources and geochemistry, air quality, and social and economic values, the affected environment comprised a larger area (i.e., watershed, airshed, local communities, etc.).

This chapter also describes the anticipated direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the Proposed Action and the No Action alternative. The criteria developed to determine impact significance were based on regulatory standards, regulatory agency guidance, or best professional judgment. Monitoring and mitigation measures developed in response to the impacts are recommended by the BLM for individual resources. These measures are not part of BMG's Plan of Operations and Reclamation Plan for the proposed project but could be required by the BLM or other regulatory agencies as conditions or stipulations of approval and authorization of the Plan of Operations and Reclamation Plan. This chapter also identifies residual adverse effects, that is, the effects that would remain after mitigation measures have been implemented.

The proposed project may result in impacts interrelated with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the area. For resources where project-specific impacts are identified, the cumulative impacts associated with the proposed expansion were evaluated together with other interrelated projects. The period of potential cumulative impact is defined as the

28-year life of the project plus 5 years for reclamation.

This chapter is organized by environmental resource. Sections 3.1 through 3.15 describe the existing conditions and potential environmental impacts associated with each resource. The short-term use of the environment relative to the long-term productivity of resources is discussed in Section 3.16. Short-term is defined as the 28-year period of project operations and 5-year period of reclamation. Long-term impacts are defined as impacts that would continue postreclamation, i.e., beyond 33 years. The irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources is described in Section 3.17.

The BLM's NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1) requires that all EISs address certain Critical Elements of the Human Environment. These critical elements are presented below along with the location in this chapter where the element is discussed. If the element does not occur within the project area or would not be affected, this is indicated below, and the element is not discussed further in the EIS. This elimination of nonrelevant issues follows the Council on Environmental Quality guidelines as stated in 40 CFR 1500.4.

- Air Quality – Section 3.9
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern - would not be affected
- Cultural Resources – Section 3.8
- Drinking Water/Ground Water Quality – Section 3.2
- Environmental Justice - Section 3.12.2.3
- Floodplains – would not be affected
- Hazardous or Solid Wastes – Section 3.15
- Invasive Non-native and Noxious Plant Species – Section 3.4
- Native American Religious Concerns – Section 3.8
- Paleontological Resources – Section 3.7
- Prime or Unique Farmlands - would not be affected

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- Threatened, Endangered, Candidate, or Sensitive Species - Section 3.4 (Vegetation) and Section 3.5 (Wildlife and Fisheries)
- Wetlands and Riparian Zones - Section 3.4
- Wild and Scenic Rivers - would not be affected
- Wilderness – Section 3.11

Numerous technical reports were prepared as support documents to this EIS. Copies of these technical reports are available for review at the following location:

- BLM Battle Mountain Field Office
50 Bastian Road
Battle Mountain, Nevada 89820